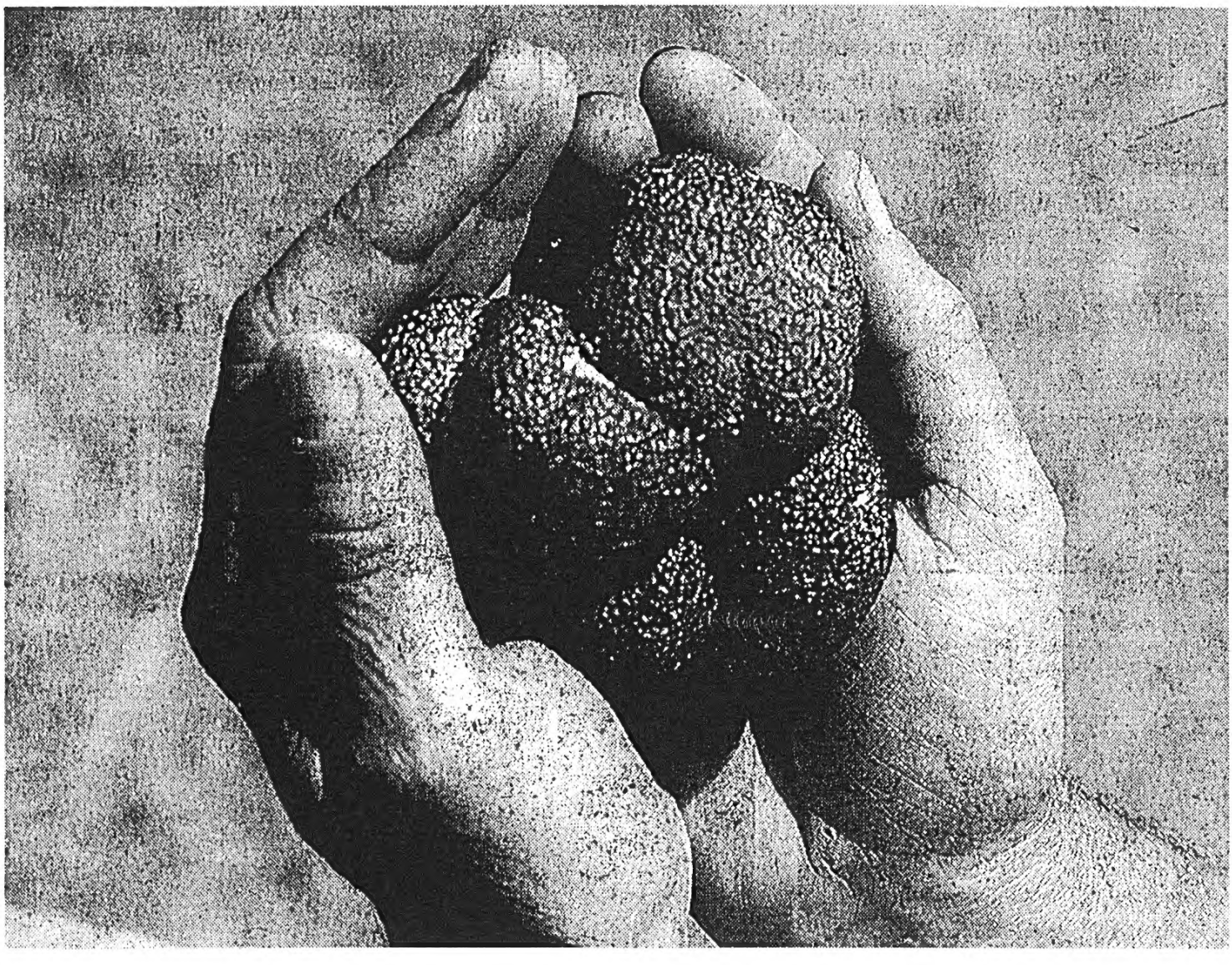
Eclipse of Moon / 8.05 pm 16th July
Total Average (reddish)
11.04 pm
for 107 minutes.

Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat Inc

July 2000



A TRUFFLE,
A GOURMET'S DELIGHT!
BUT AT $2,500 A kg
WE ARE NOT GIVING FREE SAMPLES!
BUT CHECK THE DIARY DATES
AND YOU MAY TASTE
SOME OF THESE WONDERFUL FUNGI.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice of a Motion will be given at the July Meeting, that a special meeting will be held at the start of the August meeting concerning a change to our constitution. This has come about as a result of the GST and the fact that we have now realized that we do in fact need an ABN.

DIARY DATES

Fri 7th July. Meeting. *Members night.* Short talks by club members.
Sun 9th July. Excursion. *Wombat Forest... a focus on fungi.* Leaders Kevin and Brian Andrews.
Thur 20th July. Excursion. *Union Jack Reserve and Mt Buninyong.* Leaders Joan and Brian Andrews - unless anyone else wants the job.
Thur 20th July. Lecture. *Truffles - with taste testing!* Speaker Teresa Lebel, National Herbarium, Birdwood Avenue, Melbourne, 8-00pm.
Sun 23rd July. FNCV Excursion. *Truffle Hunting.* Leader Teresa Lebel, Kirth Kiln, Gembrook, 10-30am.
Wed 26th July. *Committee Meeting.* Peter and Claire's, , 7-30.
Fri 4th August. Meeting. *Impact of Willows on the Ecology of Streams.* Speaker Michael Wilson, University of Ballarat.
Sun 6th August. Excursion. *Beachcombing at Anglesea.* Leader John Gregurke, club member.

JUNE MEETING POINTS

*1 12-15th Oct, VFNCA campout, Albury /Wodonga /Howlong. *2 Western Victoria Forest Protection Network invited FNCB members to their AGM at Camperdown. *3 50th Anniversary book, "Ballarat Bushland", Greg Binns investigating funding - City Council Projects (July), Nick Jaschenko investigating possibility of DNRE funding.

SHOW AND TELL - FIELD REPORTS

Fungi (probably *Gloeophyllum cf trabeum* - according to Tom May, based on my description BDA), growing on painted treated pine, Frank Harrap. // Graceful Parasol fungi *Macrolepiota konradii*, Wendouree (incorrectly identified at previous meeting), John Gregurke. // 3 Plumed whistling-ducks, 5 reed warblers, blue billed duck with 5 chicks, eastern swamp-hen with chicks, peregrine falcon, 2 cattle egrets, DNRE shot several feral ducks. Lake Wendouree, mid May, Ken Kraaijevelde. // Male crescent honeyeater feeding on *Banksia spinulosa, Hakea laurina and Grevillea spp* at Mt Helen, John

Mildren. // Fly agaric growing under *Nothofagus*, 10 species of fungi in Ballarat North garden, Helen Burgess. // Unusually large numbers of black swans at St Georges Lake. 40+ present compared with the usual number of 10-12, Ken McDonnell. // Wedge-tailed eagles very low while searching for food at Mt Egerton. Large fungal fruiting body, 450mm in diameter, Paul Norquay. // 370 swift parrots seen around Maryborough during a weekend count, also 95 at Clunes, Gary Cheers. // Swamp rat caught in possum trap set with bread and jam, Havelock St, Ballarat. Press reports of spotted tailed quoll(s) being detected using a hair trap in South Gippsland - the first record for 100 years - "but I observed them as a boy", Lyndsay Fink.

FUNGI AND FUNGIMAPPING

Martine Paull who works in the mycology department of the National Herbarium was our June speaker, it must have been a bit like coming home for Martine because she was an SMB (UB) horticulture student and Paul Norquay was one of her teachers! The Herbarium has also had a long association with Ballarat, Martine demonstrated this with a specimen of beautiful mouth puffball *Calostoma fuscum* collected by Williamson, in Ballarat, in 1904.

Martine then gave details about the Herbarium which was started by Von Mueller in 1853 - it was his birthday last Friday (30th June) and the Herbarium had a commemorative morning tea. We were shown slides of part of the storage area, the herbarium contains about 1.2 million specimens, of which about 20,000 are fungi. Altogether there are about 250,000 species of fungi and only about 5-10% have been scientifically described and named. There are about 5000 species of macrofungi that would be of interest to naturalists like us, but even when "experts" go on a foray they finish up with a fairly high % of species that they cannot identify. The books on sale in bookshops only describe a small % of the known species. It has been estimated that at the current rate of acquisition of knowledge concerning fungi, it will take about 10,000 years to reach the level of knowledge that ornithologists currently have of birds. It was with the above facts in mind that the Fungimap project was started - but more of that later.

Martine then gave us some of the theory concerning fungi - they are in there own separate kingdom, they are not plants, unlike plants they do not contain chlorophyll and they do not photosynthesize. Their bodies also contain chitin, the same chemical present in the exoskeletons of arthropods. They also

produce spores not seeds. Martine described modes of spore dispersal and features associated with spore production. We were also shown the basic parts and typical structure of fungi.

With the theory behind us we moved on to everyday aspects of fungi. Several species of fungi are eaten, truffles presently receiving particular attention. The microfungus yeast is also invaluable for baking and the production of alcohol, others are essential for cheese production etc. Penicillin and its derivatives revolutionised the treatment of bacterial infections, but others such as ringworm and tinea cause us a lot of trouble. Fungi are just about the only thing able to decompose lignin, without fungi the surface of the earth would be smothered with dead trees, fungi also recycle nutrients in the process. We were shown the ghoul fungus *Hebeloma aminophilum*, next to a sheep's skull, this fungus always displays this sarcophilous habit and is no doubt associated with the breakdown of compounds from the carcass and the subsequent recycling of nutrients. Several fungi are excellent for dying, especially *Dermocybe splendida.* The black fluid from autodigesting shaggy inkcaps *Coprinus comatus* was used as forgery proof ink. On the negative side fungi have been used for sinister acts, the most historically famous would be the poisoning of the Roman Emperor Claudius 1 by his second wife Agrippina, who was also his niece. She poisoned Claudius so that her son Nero, from a previous marriage, could become emperor. Claudius was fond of eating the fungi named after him *Amanita claudia.* Agrippina added some death caps *Amanita phalloides* to his favourite dish - he would have died a slow agonising death!

We were then shown slides giving a good variety of interesting and beautiful fungi. We then moved on to the topic of the Fungimap Project. As mentioned before there is much to learn about fungi and the small number of professional mycologists realized that progress could be greatly enhanced with the involvement of amateur naturalists. The project was started in 1995 with just 8 species listed as targets, this was expanded to 50 and now stands at 100 - but Tom May often says we are due for an expansion of the number of target species.

We all appreciated Martines talk and I am just wondering who will be the first FNCB member to post some records to the Herbarium!

Brian Andrews

RIVERS OF GOLD...Led by Claire Dalman

Rivers of gold!... the phrase conjured up images of a fabled El Dorado in a far-away location...or had Claire possibly unearthed a bonanza of mythical proportions...or were

we merely following in the footsteps of Dunlop and Regan overland from Clunes to Buninyong and the start of the impossibly and incalculably unforetold riches these men stumbled across at their sojourn at Poverty Point on 21st August 1851?

I packed lunch, notebooks, pen and binoculars in my backpack and set off with seventeen other members led by the charismatic and indomitable Claire, on, I hoped, a journey of unimagined proportions. Time would tell.

Claire did not disappoint us! We initially congregated in the main street of Creswick to hear the beginnings of a tape compiled by Jack Searle - a noted local historian. Creswick is named from the Creswick brothers - pastoralists who left the district as soon as gold was discovered.

Fossickers descended on Creswick and Mosquito creek. After alluvial gold ran out, companies moved in to put shafts down to the buried "rivers of gold" - this is called "deep lead" mining - where the original river and its tributaries have been covered by lava and ash which must be bored through first, to reach gold deposits, sometimes hundreds of feet underground. Much of the region to the north of Creswick is dotted with mullock heaps from these mines and they were the centre of our attention.

We passed through Allandale where the large Ballarat firm, Selkirks, originated and then onto Smeaton and its surrounding seven hills - Mt Moorookyle, Mt Kooroocheang, Kangaroo Hills, Forest Hill, Spring Hill, Lord Harry Hill and Woodhouses Hill - even in the new world Smeaton was tied to the eternal city of Rome.

Alan Keeble showed us the location of an ancient crater several kilometres in diameter and we climbed to the top of Vale Hill at the rim of the crater, we observed layers of volcanic ash or tuff - very fertile. From the top we saw seed bins of the seed cleaning firm at Smeaton, a blue gum plantation and a wheat crop was emerging on the slope.

We stopped for lunch at the impressively constructed Anderson Brothers flour and oat mill - surely a portend of big things to come in the infant colony. We crossed a bridge - built to last - constructed by Sir John Monash, later a soldier and leader of Australian troops in the First World War and after whom Monash University is named.

Then onto the New Australasian No 2 Mine and the scene of a tragedy in 1882 when the mine flooded and twenty seven miners were trapped, twenty two perished and five miraculously survived after three days underground - what faith in their companions above and the will to live on!

Then home, via the Creswick cemetery and a memorial obelisk to those who died in the mining disaster.

Tony Johns

BUSH AND BEACH AT APOLLO BAY

There was no rest for the wicked at Apollo Bay! As soon as we got in the door we were told that we were going to Mait's Rest to search for glow-worms. Arriving at Mait's Rest we saw the eerie glowing dots of light as soon as people managed to turn their torches off. We then proceeded to walk the 45 minute circuit, the forest was beautiful illuminated by the silver light of the full moon. However the peace was broken by an animal sounding like a cross between a pig and a dog, after we got over our fright we scanned the bush with our torches, speculating as to what it was - we should have known, it was Kevin!

Saturday morning king parrots were in the tree just outside the dining room. After breakfast we revisited Mait's Rest, we admired the gigantic mountain ash and enjoyed seeing the myrtle beech, there was plenty of moss and lichen, lots of ferns and a good selection of fungi including jelly tongues *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum.*

We then headed for the light-house, a group of friendly alpaccas had everybody enthralled but when we arrived at the light-house, a mangy fox running around the tables, scrounging food scraps, was not given the same welcome! After lunch we set off on the 4 hour return walk to Station Beach, on the way we admired woolly tea-tree bushes which were coming into flower and magnificent coastal scenery. Arriving at the beach, many of us were quite content to just sit down and watch the big waves come crashing in. Those with spare energy searched the beach for treasures, Greg finding a very ornate German beer bottle. Bob elected to stay at the light-house and was kept busy by tourists who wanted to have their picture taken up at the top! He said the view was breath taking, and so was the wind - it sucked off his beanie and took it way out into Bass Straight!

Saturday night was picture night and Carol kindly showed slides of her recent trip to the Antarctic.

Sunday morning we headed for Shelly Beach but couldn't make it because of the rising tide, but we still found plenty to keep us interested. On approaching the beach we saw about twelve black-browed albatross way out to sea and three sooty oystercatchers flew along the beach just in front of us. Claire found the delicate sail of a by the wind sailor. Greg found several purple starfish, Kevin found a spiny one the size

of a dinner plate and John Gregurke found a bright orange, intricately patterned biscuit starfish. At the end of the beach we spread out the shells that we had found and Genny sorted them into groups, the cowries and wentletraps seemed the most popular. Peter Dalman also contributed some finger-like sponges. Returning along the beach Greg was pleased to spot two hooded plovers on a rock platform. Our final treat was an albatross that flew along the beach only about 100m from shore, it upper wings were dark grey and it seemed to have narrow black margins on the underwing - which indicated to Greg that it was a buller's albatross.

After lunch we headed inland to the Paradise Picnic Ground, with its many fine specimens of soft tree ferns but the two female satin bower birds stole the show!

We were all very grateful to John Mildren for organizing the weekend and the fine accommodation at the Star of the Sea Convent. And if you want to know how to cook fish, ask Peter Billing!

Brian Andrews

Lamplough-Avoca Excursion...7th June.

We left Ballarat with optimism but who **really** thought we would see the nocturnal marsupials and birds we were seeking?

To heighten the air of expectation we first visited Lamplough Reservoir. The two pairs of Black Duck on the water swam into the vegetation around the shore. A Dusky Moorhen was jumping out of the water and diving. It came up with a small fish in its beak. The variety of eucalypts around the dam was interesting. There were Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, Yellow Gum *E. leucoxylon*, Red Box *E. polyanthemos*, Yellow Box *E. melliodora*, Grey Box *E. microcarpa* and Long-leaved Box *E. nortonii* with its glaucous buds. A young Wedge-tailed Eagle flew over the water and roosted in the Red Gums to give us a close view of its rusty brown feathers on its neck and back. The Sulphur-crested Cockatoos screeched their alarm call. A total of 15 species of birds were seen during the stroll around the dam. These included Common Bronzewing Pigeon, Eastern Rosella, Red-rumped Parrot and Brown Treecreeper.

While having lunch under umbrellas we observed mosses and lichens on the ground and mistletoe on the gum trees. Cranberry Heath *Austroloma humifusum* and Spiny Bitter-pea *Daviesia genistifolia* were beginning to flower.

After a visit to the bakery in Avoca we travelled down a track on the east boundary of Glenmona Forest. We stopped in front of a dead tree that had a slit in the trunk about 3 metres above the ground and several hollow spouts towering above. The tree also housed a hive of feral bees. Pat and

Bill explained how they stopped for a cuppa at this spot and while watching birds saw mice size animals emerge from the slit and run up and down the tree. Within minutes we saw one animal emerge and climb to the top of the tree. With careful observation we saw the grey fur grading to a rich rufous on the flank and rump and the black tipped tail. These features confirmed the identification of the Yellow-footed Antechinus. Other individuals were tempted out of the nest with dried apple and two came down to the ground and ran across the track to a pile of dead branches which would house a living invertebrate larder.

At our last stop Bill tapped on a dead stump that ended in a hollow spout. A mammal-like head and eyes appeared and soon we saw the beak. It was an Owlet Nightjar that flew out and perched in a nearby tree. Fuscous Honeyeaters, Wood Duck, Masked Lapwings, Willy Wagtails and a Jacky Winter inhabited the adjacent paddocks.

This successful excursion had its roots in the careful observation of the Murphys'. We were well rewarded with excellent views of animals that are seldom seen. Thank You.

John Gregurke

JUNE POSER...BILLS' SALVATION

1. Pelicans. 2. Alluvial. 3. Crop Milk. 4. Ladybird. 5. Waratahs. 6. Crayfish. 7. Parasite....and Tadpoles should be left!

BDA

ROGER'S QUADDY.

In a recent letter Roger Thomas set me a poser : Why are crane flies most active in rainy weather in May / June ? Very few insects are out in those months in those conditions. Lots were about in Creswick Forest last Saturday afternoon (3rd June) - cool & wet (but pleasant enough for a 3 hour bushwalk!).

I sent back a possible solution but it could well be wrong and it would be interesting to hear what other members think!

BDA

---------***---------- FNCB ----------***---------

Meetings are held at the Ballarat Horticulture centre, corner of Gregory and Gillies Streets, ie. the NW corner of the Botanic Gardens, VICROADS 254 F8, commencing at 7-30pm

Excursions depart from Creswick Plaza, VICROADS 255 M10, at 9-30 am, unless specified otherwise.

Committee; Claire Dalman (President).. , Greg Binns (Vice President).. , John Gregurke (Secretary).. , Bob Curtain (Treasurer).. , Brian Andrews (Editor).. , Helen Burgess, Maureen Christie, Lyndsay Fink, Carol Hall, John Mildren, Pat Murphy.

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